

# **POLITICAL SCIENCE 101**

## **AMERICAN NATIONAL GOVERNMENT**

Westfield State University  
Online Course (POLS 0101)  
Summer Session I  
May 18, 2015 – June 26, 2015

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Office Hours: By appointment

This is an on-line version of American National Government, a college-level introductory course to American national politics. This course is part of the Common Core of Studies at Westfield State University and counts three credits in U.S. History & Government [HSGV]. By taking this class, Westfield State students earn 3 of the 12 required credits in the Social Science Section. For non-Westfield State students, this course can be easily transferred to other colleges and universities and count toward general education credits. The syllabus and course description for credit transfer can be obtained from the instructor upon request.

### **A. Course Description**

This course seeks to introduce students to basic theories, key concepts, and important historical questions and policy issues in American politics. The intended audience of this class is non-political science majors, who take this course for general education credits, as well as political science majors, who seek to build a solid foundation of social sciences for their careers and a better understanding of the world we live in. Either way, this course is designed to help students broaden their insight and develop critical mind, two essential elements of liberal arts education.

This course is organized into four parts. Part One examines the theme of the democratic debate that shaped the struggle among the founding fathers over the constitution and the basic contours of political discourse today. Part Two focuses on the basic institutions of American politics: Congress, the presidency, and the courts. Part Three covers the basic processes of political participation in America: electoral mobilization, public opinion, the media, political parties, and interest groups. And Part Four explores major policy issues in this country: civil rights, economic policy, social welfare policy, and the healthcare reform.

### **B. Course Requirements and Grades**

Students are required to participate in weekly group discussions online. Student participation in the discussion forums will count for 60% of overall grade. The remaining 40% will be based on two short papers (about 4 pages each).

### **C. Course Materials**

*The Democratic Debate* by Miroff, Seidelman, Swanstrom, and De Luca is required for this course. An ebook can be rented for \$36. If you prefer a hard copy, the book is rentable for

\$45.40 and a used book can be purchased for \$69.50. To purchase/rent the book, go to the campus bookstore's website <http://www.westfieldstate.bncollege.com/> or call 413 579 3103.

Miroff, Bruce, Raymond Seidelman, Todd Swanstrom, and Tom De Luca. 2010. *The Democratic Debate: American Politics in an Age of Change*. Boston: Wadsworth.

#### **D. Course Outline and Schedule**

Week One (May 18-May 22): Founding of the United States

The Independence War

The Constitutional Convention and Shaping of the US Government

The Federalists vs. the Anti-federalists

Reading Assignment: Miroff, Seidelman, Swanstrom, and De Luca (MSSD), Chapter 2

Week Two (May 25-May 29): The American Political System

Congressional Oversight

Presidential Powers

Checks and Balances

Reading Assignment: MSSD, Chapters 11 and 12

Week Three (June 1-June 5): The Judiciary and Civil Liberties

The Federal Court System

The Supreme Court in History

The Bill of Rights and Civil Liberties

Reading Assignment: MSSD, Chapter 14

Week Four (June 8-June 12): Electoral Campaigns and Interest Groups

Interest Groups & Lobbying

Campaign Donations and Elections

Voter Participation

Reading Assignment: MSSD, Chapters 5

Week Five (June 15-June 19): Policymaking in America

Social Welfare Policy – Social Security and Medicare

Budget Deficits and Government Debt

The Tea Party & Occupy Wall Street

Reading Assignment: MSSD, Chapter 17

Week Six (June 22-June 26): America and the Healthcare Reform

Problems in the US Healthcare System

Healthcare in Other Countries

The Obama Healthcare Reform

Reading Assignment: MSSD, Chapter 3